Use Your Voice: 
Public Speaking and Civility in Local Government

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MMA Annual Meeting
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Preparing for success

• Be sure the meeting space can comfortably accommodate the anticipated crowd
• Thank everyone for coming and set the ground rules
• Have a start and end time
• Consider having a “side room” for issues that need personal attention
• Consider ways to engage the public for their help on the issue - give them a role
• If all else fails, call a brief recess
Setting the tone

• Have a plan
• Speak with your town administrator, other staff and fellow board members to set the expectations
• Brainstorm all scenarios “what do we do if....”
• Smile, relax and remain calm and in control
• Breathe and be aware of the energy in the room
• Practice ways to redirect discussion in a positive way
• Remember to thank people for their respectful dialogue

• [https://youtu.be/Ng_-HgRfGBY](https://youtu.be/Ng_-HgRfGBY)

“Citizens of Pawnee,” You Tube, November 28, 2012
Top 5 Lessons from Melrose’s Civility Initiative

1. Civility starts with yourself....not others

2. Think outside-the-box of City/Town Hall

3. Civility can and should be measured

4. Community-wide civility comes with a cost

5. Sustainable civility has a personality
Visitor Code of Conduct

• Adopted by the Town of Acton, posted in public buildings
• Lists what the town will not tolerate
• Also includes focus on common sense behavior
• Not a “Workplace Violence” policy but emphasizes anti-harassment principles for all persons entering town facilities
Policy Development, II

Employee and/or Appointed/Elected Official Policy

• Distribute/train city/town employees
• Nothing here replaces State law [Ch 268A] or CBA’s
• “must act with fundamental honesty/integrity”
• Do: act with respect, dignity, fairness
• Don’t: disparage/misrepresent the City/Town through actions, written correspondence, gestures
• Always: treat others in manner that enhances public respect & confidence in entire City/Town
“So let us begin anew—remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is subject to proof.”

-John F. Kennedy